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CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY AND EVALUATION

CENTERVILLE COMPLEX MINES

FOR

THE MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF STATE LANDS

HELENA, MONTANA

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MINERAL RESEARCH CENTER
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CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY AND EVALUATION

CENTERVILLE COMPLEX MINES

FOR

THE MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF STATE LANDS

HELENA, MONTANA

BY

PAUL ANDERSON

CULTURAL RESOURCE DIVISION

MINERAL RESEARCH CENTER

P.O. Box 3708

BUTTE, MONTANA 59701

JULY 8, 1982

D-86 MRC76

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.. 1

LEGAL DESCRIPTION.. 3

METHODOLOGY.. 3

GENERAL FEATURES AND PHYSIOGRAPHY OF THE PROJECT AREA.......... 3

    Climate... 4
    Vegetation.. 4
    Geology... 4

HISTORIC BACKGROUND.. 5

SITE DESCRIPTION... 8

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.. 16

BIBLIOGRAPHY... 17

APPENDIX A... 19

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Project Area Map.. 2

2. Site Map.. 9

3. Photograph of Section A.. 10

4. Photograph of Section B.. 10

5. Photograph of Section C.. 11

6. Floor Plan for Tipple at Section E............................... 12

7. Photograph of Tipple at Section E................................ 13

8. Photograph of South Hillside at Section E........................ 13

INTRODUCTION

In February of 1982 the Mineral Research Center in Butte, Montana was contacted by the Montana Department of State Lands (DSL) and requested to perform a cultural resource inventory and evaluation of several abandoned coal mines in Cascade County, Montana (Figure 1).

In the interest of public safety and health the DSL plans to close all open adits, remove remaining structures and reclaim disturbed areas at the mines through removal, contouring and/or revegetation.

The following report will describe the physical setting, the historic background and the present state of the sites. An evaluation as to the eligibility of the sites to the National Register of Historic Places and a summary of projected impact on the sites will be given.

All field notes, photographs and supportive information resulting from the cultural resource fieldwork will be maintained at the Mineral Research Center.

Field investigations were conducted on May 24 and 25, 1982. The Principal Investigator and Project Director is Paul Anderson. Connie Moore was the field assistant.

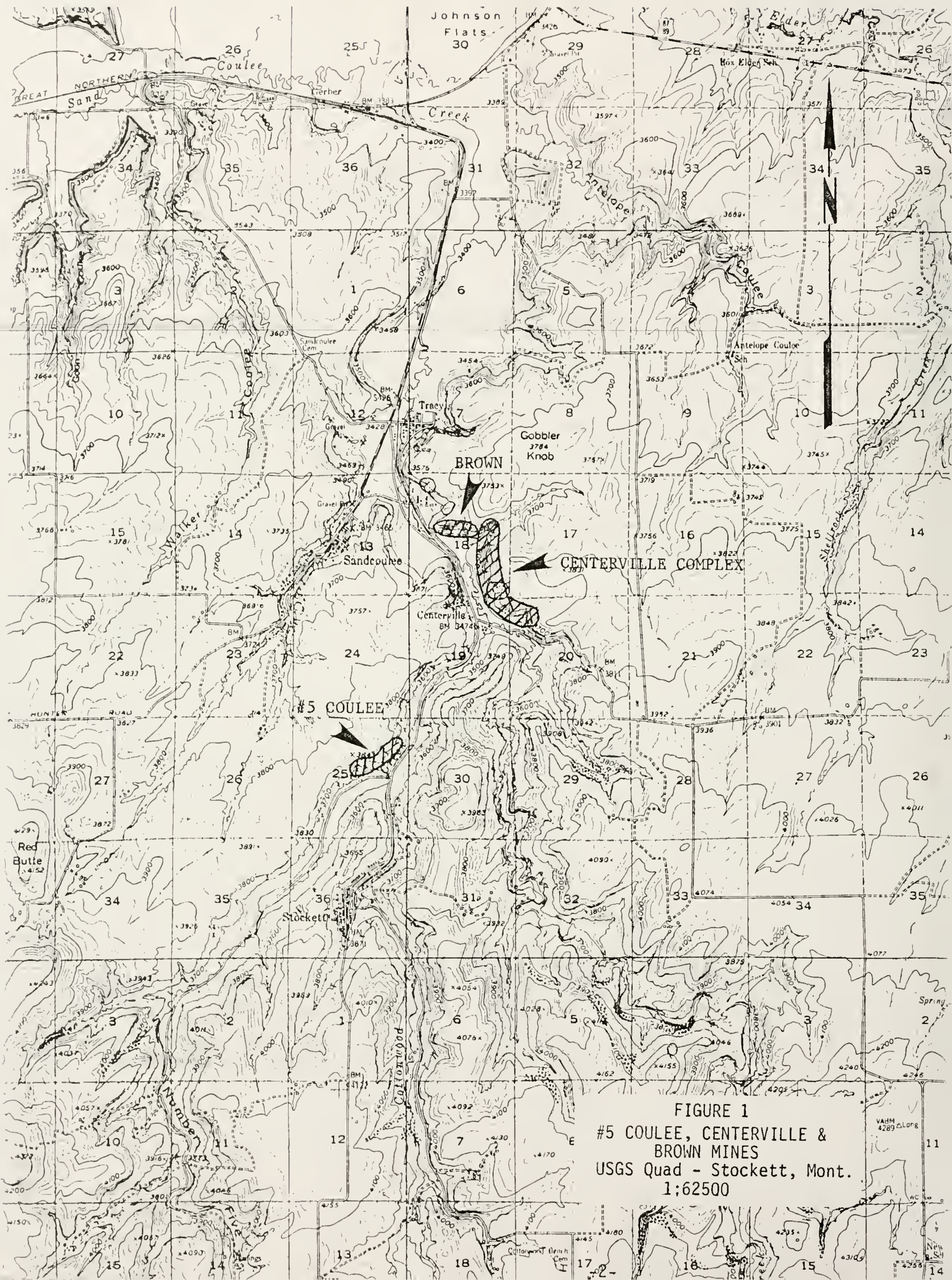

FIGURE 1
#5 COULEE, CENTERVILLE &
BROWN MINES
USGS Quad - Stockett, Mont.
1;62500

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF THE CENTERVILLE COMPLEX MINES

E1/2 SE1/4 & SE1/4 NE1/4 Section 18, T19N R5E.
NE1/4 NE1/4 Section 19, T19N R5E.
NW1/4 NW1/4 Section 20, T19N R5E.

METHODOLOGY

The project area was carefully examined by the project team and the site was recorded, mapped and photographed. Undisturbed areas were sysmatically examined for possible prehistoric activities. Much of the ground was covered by dense vegetation making survey difficult. Due to the disturbed nature of the areas it would seem likely that had there been any prehistoric evidence it would have long since been buried or destroyed.

The state site files at the University of Montana; the Montana Historical Society's Historic Preservation Office files; and the Montana Fish and Game Commission's Historic Sites Compendium were searched for previously recorded sites in the area. No prehistoric sites were in the immediate vicinity of the DSL project mines. Historic sites in the area consist of other abandoned coal mines and will not be impacted by the current DSL mine reclamation project.

Documentary evidence on individual mines was sketchy at best. Most of the modern records of the mine safety inspection office were destroyed some time ago and there is very little in the way of records for specific mines during the boom period from 1890 to 1930. Personal interviews were conducted with several of the residents in the area who worked in the mines. Dates and names gained from these interviews should be considered tentative - understandable given the number of years that have elapsed since the mines were in operation.

GENERAL FEATURES AND PHYSIOGRAPHY OF THE PROJECT AREA

The Belt and Sand Coulee mines are located within the Great Falls coal field. This is a transitional region between the plains and the mountains and thus contains features characteristic of both topographies. The Great Falls coal field lies between the Highwood Mountains to the north and the Little Belt Mountains to the south. The area between the two mountain ranges is a high plateau sloping gently northward and traversed by numerous mountain streams which have created relatively deep, narrow valleys. This is especially true of the area west of Otter Creek. These streams have cut through and exposed the coal beds making them accessible to early development. The major drainages in this area include the Smith River, Sand Coulee, Belt Creek and Otter Creek (Fisher 1906).

The general elevation for the area is between 3,500 and 4,000 feet with the lowest point being along the Missouri River at about 3,000 feet while the highest summits of the Little Belt Mountains rise to altitudes of 4,500 to 5,000 feet.

Climate

The Great Falls region is characterized by a climate ranging from extremes of bitterly cold winters to short but hot summers. Weather patterns on a daily basis are highly variable and are shaped by such factors as topography, sun exposure, precipitation, temperature, and prevailing winds. The mountain ranges in the region affect the weather since air currents along the fronts carry rains in the summer and heavy snow falls in the winter which provide water for the area's streams, and moisture for crops making the area one of the nation's prime wheat producing regions. The region is also known for its "chinook" winds during the winter which are a frequent phenomenon. Average precipitation is 15 to 16 inches annually although perennial surface water is generally available throughout the region.

Vegetation

Vegetation types fall within the Northern Grassland zone with a large percentage of the area under cultivation for wheat and hay. Other species include: Rhus, chokecherry, snowberry, fringed sagewort, wild rye, Japanese brome, cheatgrass, quackgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, bluegrass, cactus, green needlegrass, rubber rabbit brush, sagebrush and cottonwood trees.

Geology

The general geology of the Great Falls-Lewistown coal field is best described by Silverman and Harris as follows:

> The lower part of the Morrison Formation, a terrestrial section consisting of 45 to 200 feet of varicolored mudstone and shale interbedded with lenses of gray sandstone and limestone, was deposited upon an emergent surface of marine Jurassic rocks. In a near-desert, interior-drainage environment, the upper Morrison and Kootenai rocks of central Montana then accumulated as lacustrine and flood-plain deposits. The upper Morrison consists of 5 to 50 feet of black shale intercalated with coal as much as 12 feet thick. The coal is depositionally discontinuous, having accumulated to greatest thickness in relatively small swamplands marginal to one or more lakes that occupied most of central Montana during late Morrison time.
>
> The kinds of leaf compressions in black shale associated with coal indicate a xeric climate around the interior lakes, which eventually drained or filled, exposing the carbonaceous matter

> to subaerial erosion. After renewed uplift to the west, or increase in local aridity, or both, easterly flowing streams deposited and reworked the alluvial basal Kootenai sandstone over the entire area. In places small channel cutouts developed in the peat, but the porous organic remains produced a surface generally resistant to erosion. Regionally, basal Kootenai sandstone rests unconformably on upper Morrison beds, although the unconformity is relatively small. Compaction rather than erosional features characterize the Morrison-Kootenai contact.
>
> The Great Falls-Lewistown field contains an estimated 750 million short tons of bituminous and subbituminous coal reserves in seams more than 14 inches thick. The nature and distribution of this coal make it amenable to future use of coal-steam-electric generation in central Montana (Silverman & Harris 1967:iv).

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The presence of coal in the area was first observed by the Lewis and Clark expedition as they traveled up the Missouri River. On April 22, 1805 Lewis noted in his journal:

> Coal or carbonated wood pumice stone lava and other mineral appearances still continue. the coal appears to be of better quality; I exposed a specimen of it to the fire and found that it birnt [sic] tolerably well, it afforded but little flame or smoke, but produced a hot and lasting fire (DeVoto 1953:98).

However, seventy-two years would elapse before this coal was first developed. A transplanted Pennsylvanian, John K. Castner, recognized the potential of the exposed coal seams along Belt Creek and filed claims on the bituminous coal-bearing lands in the area in 1877. For the next few years Castner operated a small "wagon" mine and hauled coal in mule team wagons to Fort Benton for use by the steamboats and the local community. Coal was also initially mined at nearby Sand Coulee during this period and was hauled by wagons to Fort Benton. By 1885 the combined production from the Sand Coulee and Belt mines was 1,900 tons, with 1,200 tons coming from Belt. The coal trade was apparently profitable since the Fort Benton "River Press" in September 1887 reported that large piles of coal from Belt and Sand Coulee were on the levees for use by the steamboats (Chadwick 1973; Cascade County Historical Society 1981; Stober 1979).

Major development of the Belt-Sand Coulee coal fields would not occur, however, until the coming of the railroad. In 1887 Jim Hill's St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba Railroad (soon to be called The Great Northern Railway) laid tracks all the way from Minot, North Dakota to the new town of Great Falls in one season. By 1888 a branch line had been opened to Sand Coulee and in 1891 the railroad passed through Belt on its way to the silver mines at Neihart. Coal production expanded to fill the increasing consumption by the railroads and the growing community of Great Falls. Coal demand increased even further when the Anaconda Company's copper smelter was opened in Great Falls in 1892. When Castner first opened his Belt mine he built several experimental coke ovens. Later a hundred beehive coke ovens - each with a capacity of three tons - were in operation to supply the Great Falls smelter. Unfortunately, the benches of coking coal could not be economically separated from the non-coking coal and the ovens were closed down. During the 1950s these ovens were dismantled to salvage the bricks (Chadwick 1973; Stober 1979).

The major economic force in the Belt-Sand Coulee area was the Anaconda Mining Company which determined the demand for coal and also owned and operated several of the largest mines. In 1889 the Company bought the Castner Coal and Coke Company in Belt and operated it until 1913. At Sand Coulee the company acquired the Lochray Coal Company in 1914 and ran it for the next ten years (Morgan 1966).

Other major mines in the area would include the G. W. Merkle Mine near Belt and the Nelson Mine at Sand Coulee. These two mines furnished a large share of the coal used by the Great Northern Railroad. The railroad also operated its own mine at Stockett in the 1890s under a subsidiary, the Cottonwood Coal Company. This same company developed a mine at Giffen, a few miles south of Stockett, during the early 1930s which remained in production until 1946 when the Great Northern took the last of its steam locomotives out of service (Morgan 1966).

Almost all the area's mines were drift mines - so named because the coal could be reached by horizonal "drifts" driven into the coal from the side of a hill. The room and pillar method of mining the coal was generally used which was not the most efficient for coal recovery but did save on labor costs (Stober 1979).

The coal boom in the Belt and Sand Coulee area came to an end during the 1920s. The coal seams were running shallow with a greater percentage of rock, making it increasingly more expensive to mine. More important was the decline in demand. The Anaconda refinery ceased to use coal or coke for its furnaces; domestic users began to switch to natural gas and fuel oil; and the Great Northern Railroad began to use oil-burning steam locomotives and eventually would convert to diesel engines (Chadwick 1973).

By the 1930s all the major mines had closed except for the Cottonwood Coal Company's mine at Giffen. A few small wagon mines supplied coal for local domestic use during the Depression and there was a slight increase in demand during World War II. With the closing of the Giffen mine in 1946 coal production in the area virtually ceased.

The Great Falls field produced almost 36 million tons of coal during the period from 1885 to 1955 which was approximately 23 percent of the total state production. Nearly a third of the total tonnage was mined during the first two decades of this period. Over 15 million tons was produced during the life of the field by just three of the largest mines: the Castner-Anaconda mine at Belt (7.5 million tons over 25 years); the Lochray-Anaconda mine at Belt (2.3 million ton over 10 years); and the Cottonwood mine near

Stockett (5.4 million tons over 15 years). The Great Falls field also employed most of the state's 3,000 to 4,000 coal miners (Silverman & Harris 1967).

Future energy needs may result in new coal development in the area but this would most likely be through strip mining methods employing far fewer men than did the underground mines. The underground coal mining boom of the 1910s and 1920s was a unique chapter of the region's history that probably will not be seen again.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Site Identification: 24CA150 - Centerville Complex mines

Site Location: E1/2 SE1/4 & SE1/4 NE1/4 Sec. 18, T19N R5E
NE1/4 NE1/4 Sec. 19, T19N R5E
NW1/4 NW1/4 Sec. 20, T19N R5E

Elevation: 1067 to 1128 m

Site Area: 500,000 m^2

Site Description:

The Centerville Complex mines are located on the west facing hillside which is just east of Sand Coulee Creek and the town of Centerville (Figure 2). The complex runs for about three quarters of a mile with coal slack dumps spaced at fairly regular intervals. The E section at the north end of the site area is on both sides of a fairly narrow coulee which runs to the northeast. The site is covered with a dense growth of Rhus, snowberry, rabbit brush, bluegrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, green needlegrass, cactus and sagebrush. Water for the mining operations could have been obtained from Sand Coulee Creek.

Structures and Cultural Materials:

Almost nothing remains of the original mining operations except for coal slack dumps, adit entrances, the ruins of a tipple and scattered debris.

Section A had the remains of a wooden wagon on the slack dump; a few posts and debris from a small tipple on the side of the dump; and a foundation remains for an unknown structure below the dump (Figure 3). A closed adit entrance was at the top of the dump.

Section B consisted of three slack dumps. The southern-most dump also had the remains of a wooden wagon and a small frame shack next to the adit entrance which may have served as a miner's warming shack - sometimes called a "doghouse" (Figure 4). A collapsed adit entrance is at the top of the adjacent dump.

Section C consists of a single slack dump with two closed adit entrances (Figure 5).

Section D consists of a single slack dump with one closed adit entrance.

Section E is the only part of the complex with any significant structural remains. The ruins of a tipple are located on the north hillside (Figures 6 & 7). The loading chutes are all that remain of the structure and these are in poor condition. Two adit entrances - one open and one collapsed - are located above the ruins. On the opposite southern hillside there are three open and two closed adit entrances with a tramway road bed running along the hillside to the east end of the coulee (Figure 8). At the west

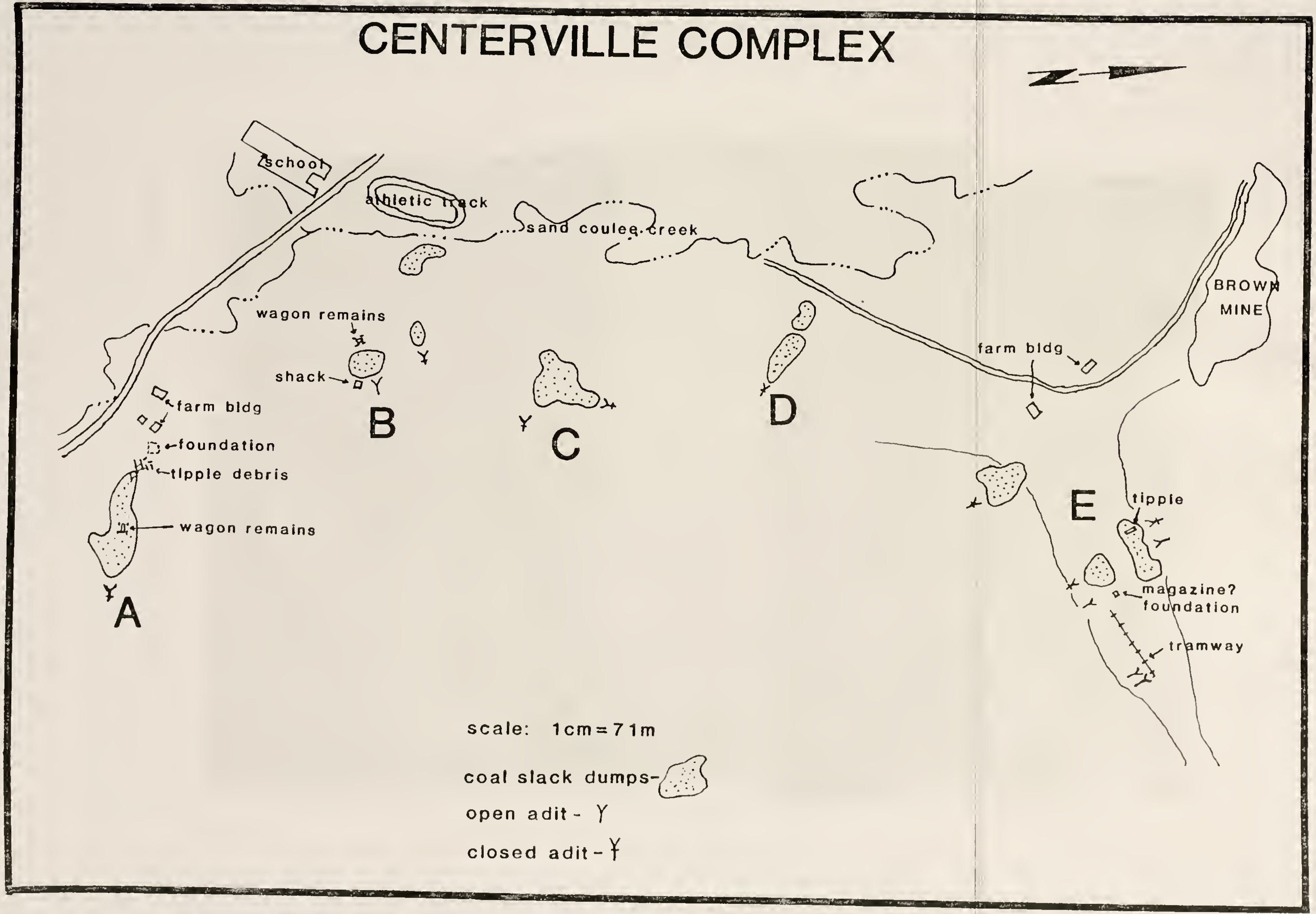
CENTERVILLE COMPLEX
N
school
athletic track
sand coulee creek
wagon remains
shack
farm bldg
foundation
tipple debris
wagon remains
A
B
C
D
E
BROWN MINE
farm bldg
tipple
magazine? foundation
tramway
scale: 1cm=71m
coal slack dumps-
open adit - Y
closed adit - Ɏ

Figure 2

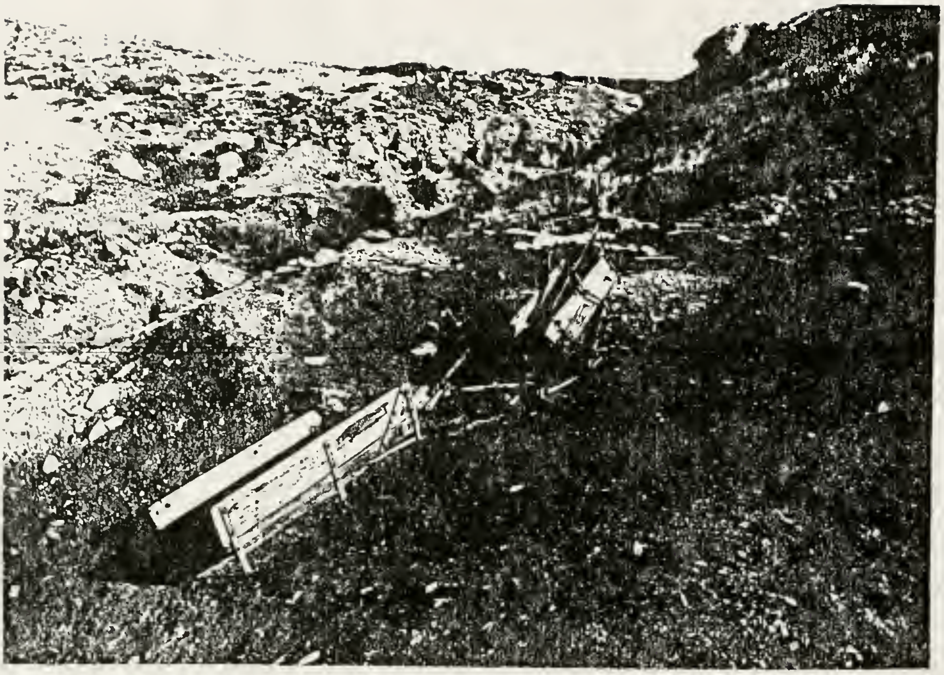

Figure 3. Wagon remains and coal slack dump Section A (view to north).

Figure 4. Adit portal and shack Section B (view to east).

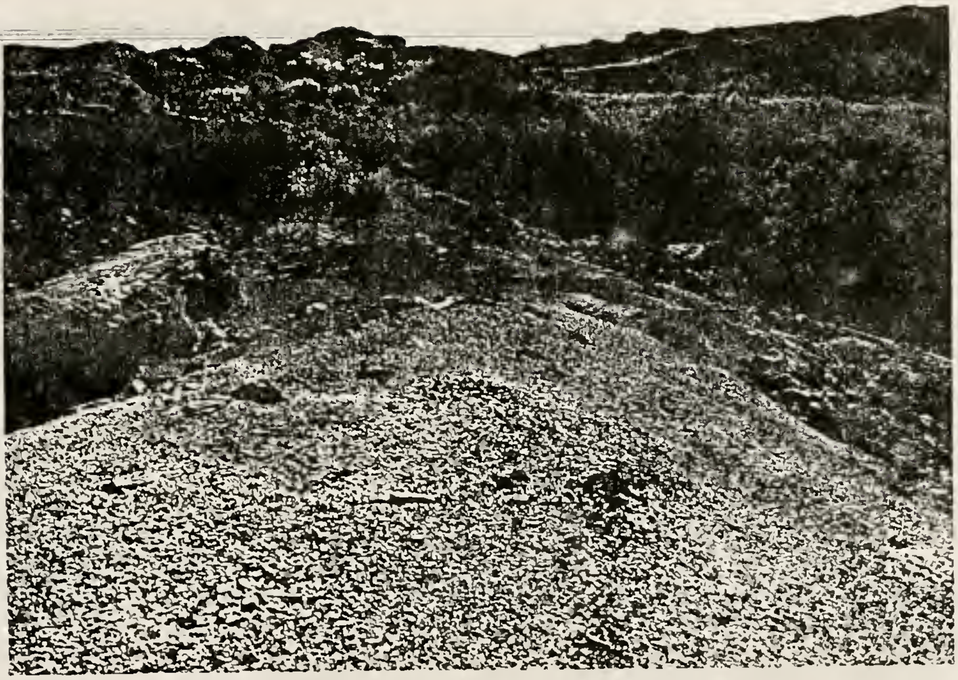

Figure 5. Coal slack dumps and adit portals Section C (view to north).

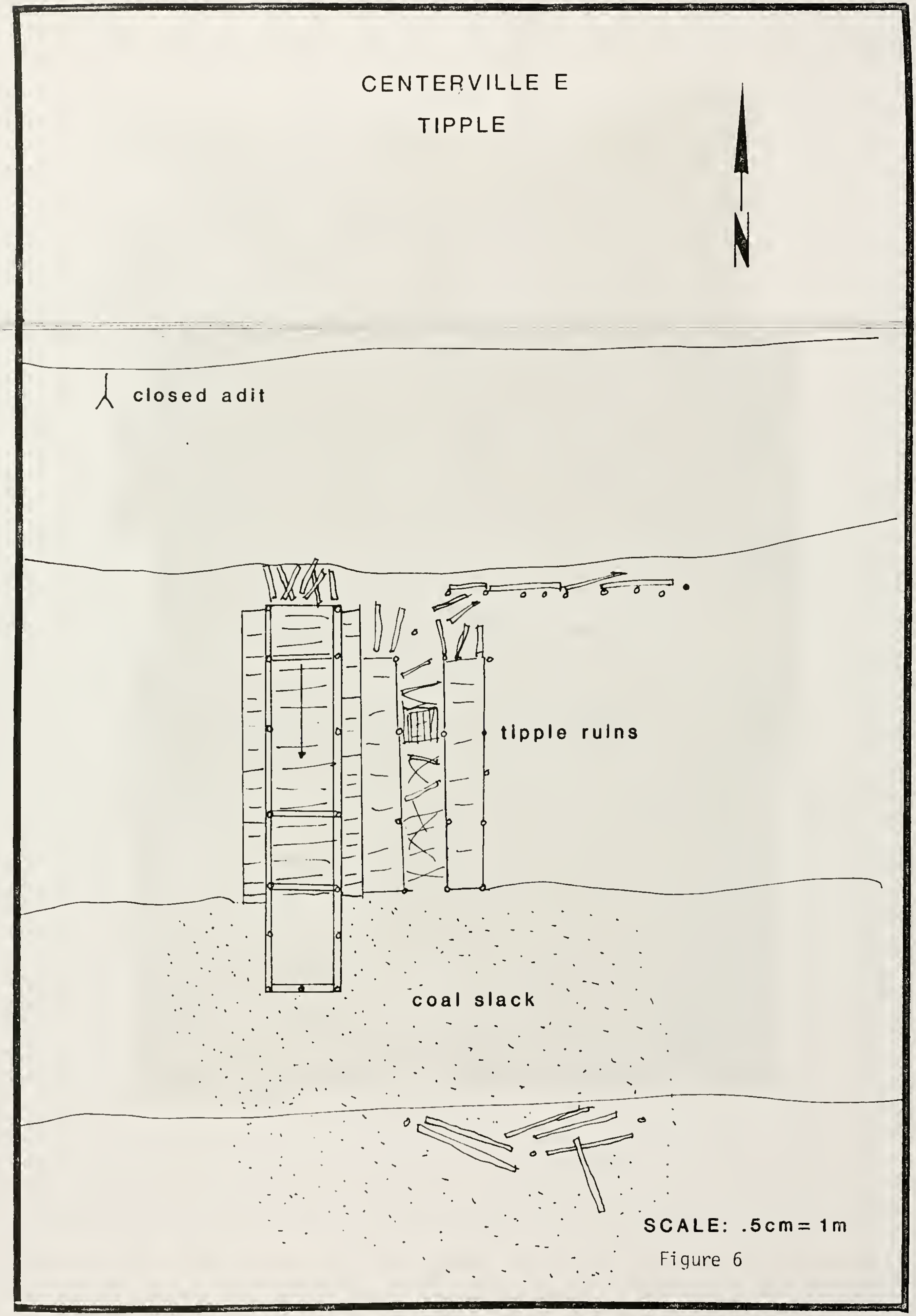
CENTERVILLE E
TIPPLE
N
closed adit
tipple ruins
coal slack
SCALE: .5cm= 1m

Figure 6

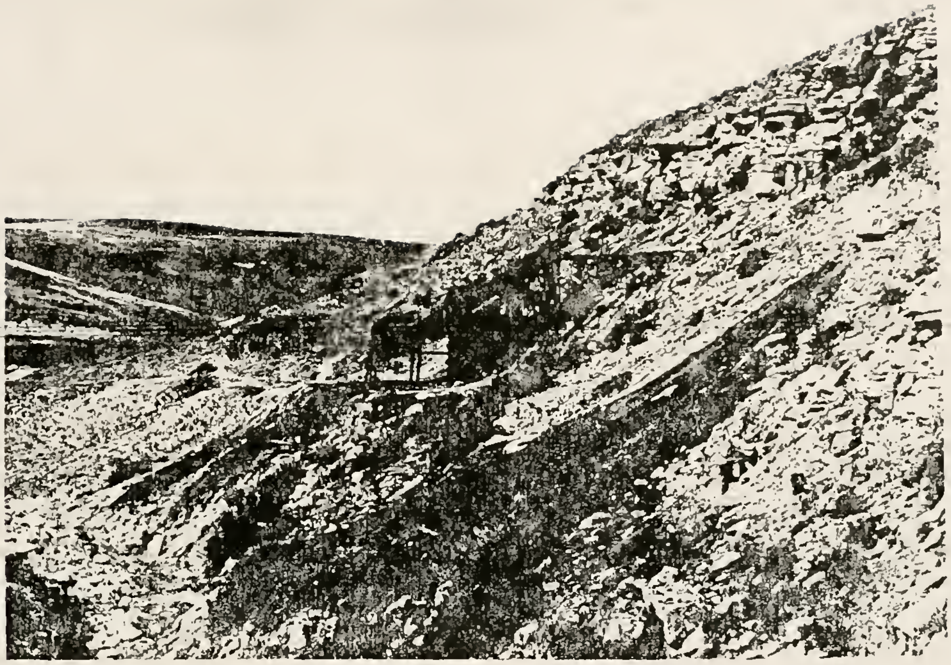

Figure 7. Tipple on north hillside Section E (view to west).

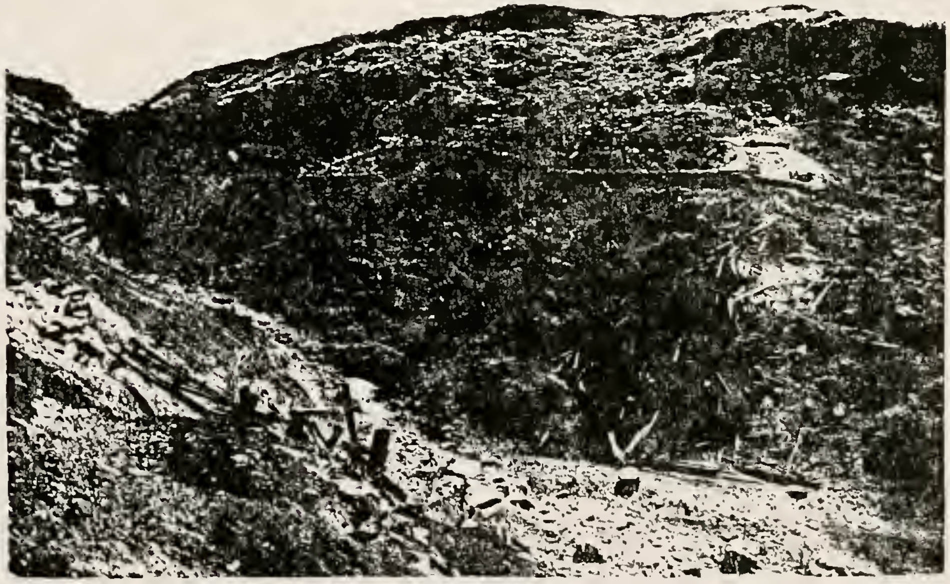

Figure 8. South hillside (view from tipple to southeast).

end of the tramway bed is a small stone foundation for a structure which may have been a powder magazine.

Historic Development:

The Centerville Complex consists of five different small prospect or wagon mine operations. Specific records were not available on these operations and what information could be obtained came from interviews with local residents which were not precise. The patent records show that homestead entries for the land on which the site is located were granted to: Ariste Baque on June 27, 1918 (#638451); Alfred G. Ladd on January 5, 1892 (#1990); James G. Anthony on August 3, 1904 (#232); and Walter Brown on November 28, 1900 (#6275).

According to local informants the mine at section A was operated by Jim and Tom Latham from around 1910 to the mid 1920s and was a moderate size wagon mine during its productive period.

The mine at section B was called the Kerns Mine according to local informants and was in operation until the mid 1930s and employed some 30 to 40 men.

No information was available on the mines at section C and D although they would appear to be small prospects or wagon mines.

The mine at section E was the most substantial operation of the mines in the Centerville Complex. According to local informants it was owned by James Anthony and was operated by John Christopher and John Super during the 1920s. A substantial amount of the coal from the mine was apparently sold to an ice plant in Great Falls.

Evaluation:

Very little remains on the site from the original mining operation other than coal slack dumps. The only structural remains of any consequence is the tipple ruins at section E. It is unlikely that further work on the site would reveal additional information on mining history and technology during this period.

National Register Statement:

The site does not appear to meet the eligibility requirements for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Management Recommendations:

The Department of State Lands considers the ruins of the Centerville Complex mines to be a safety and health hazard and plans to close open adits, reclaim disturbed areas and remove the remaining structures. This plan would not have a detrimental effect on the site since it is not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The site has been recorded, mapped and photographed and no further work is recommended.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Centerville Complex mines (24CA150) were recorded, mapped, photographed and historic records researched. The Centerville Complex is not recommended as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and therefore the reclamation plans of the State Department of Lands will not have a detrimental effect on the site. The site area was also carefully examined for prehistoric cultural resources. No prehistoric cultural remains were found.

The evaluation of this report concurs with the DSL that the open adits, coal slack dumps and structural remains pose a threat to public safety and should be reclaimed or removed. It is recommended that the DSL plans be allowed to proceed on schedule. However, if subsurface prehistoric or historic cultural materials are revealed during the reclamation work, the Mineral Research Center in Butte and the Montana Historic Preservation Office in Helena should be notified immediately.

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U.S. Department of the Interior - Bureau of Land Management
n.d. Montana Plat Maps and Historical Indexes for T19N R4E, T19N R5E, and T19N R6E.

APPENDIX A

SITE FORM NO. 1

Montana Tech Alumni Foundation
MINERAL RESEARCH CENTER
Post Office Box 3708 • Butte, Montana 59701

Cultural Resource Inventory

1. Site Number 24CA150

2. County Cascade

3. State Montana

4. Site Name Centerville Complex Mines

5. Other Names For Site

6. City or Town Centerville, Mont. Vicinity of X

7. Map Reference
Stockett, Mont.
N4715-W11100/15
1955

8. Township & Range Number
T19N R5E

9. Section Number
NW¼ NW¼ sec. 20
NE¼ NE¼ sec. 19
E½ SE¼ & SE¼ NE¼ sec. 18

10. Latitude
47° 23' 25"
47° 24' 05"

11. Longitude
111° 07' 55"
111° 08' 20"

12. UTM Reference

Zone	Easting	Northing
12	490000	5248450
12	489500	5249500

13. Publications

Surface Ownership
15. Federal ☐ State Private X
Otto E. Johnson
Sandcoulee, Mont.

16. Mineral Ownership
Federal ☐ State Private X
All Minerals ☒
Coal Only ☐

17. Project Name
State Department of Lands
Mine Reclamation Project

18. National Register
On
Nominated
Determined Eligible
Recommended
Need Data
Not Eligible X

19. Site located by & Date
P. Anderson & C. Moore 5/25/82

20. This Record by & Date
P. Anderson
6/8/82

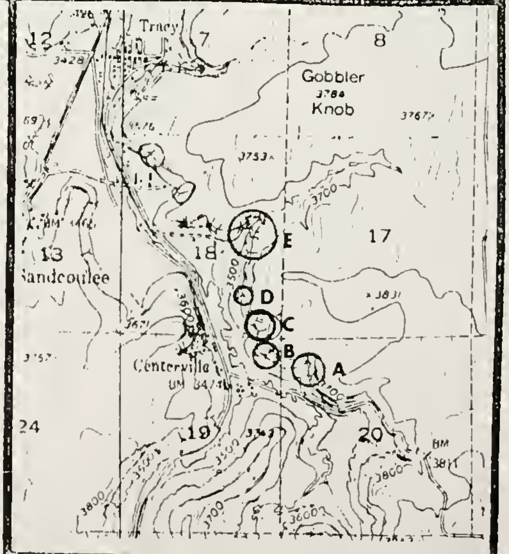
21. Revisions by & Date

22. Site Category
Historic X
Prehistoric
Other specify

23. Site Status
Survey X
Photo/map X
Tested
Excavated
Other specify
Comment

14. Narrative of site location and access to site

Take the paved county road to Centerville and the site will be found on the hillside east of Centerville and extending north for ½ mile.



SITE FORM NO. 2

SETTING AND CONDITION OF SITE

Site Name Centerville Complex Mine

Phytogeography

1. Elevation
1067 Meters 3500 Feet
1128 Meters 3700 Feet

2. Distance, direction and nature of nearest water source.
Sand Coulee Creek is from 200 m to 500 m west of the site.

3. Soil (color, character, depth)

5. General vegetative community
rangeland

6. On-site vegetation
Rhus, snowberry, rubber rabbit brush, bluegrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, green needlegrass

4. Geographic land form/ topography character/ slope / site faces:
stream bottom and rolling hills

Site condition

7. Natural deterioration

Degree
none ____
light ____
moderate __X__
heavy ____
complete

Type
sheetwash ____
gully ____
wind erosion ____
animal disturb. ____
natural weathering __X__

8. Human Disturbance (real/potential)

Degree
light ____
moderate ____
complete __X__
unknown ____

Type
buildings ____
towers ____
roads ____

Distance From

Comments: The DSL reclamation will remove or reclaim the remains of the site.

9. Environmental/Economic threats to site
____ Private development
____ Zoning
____ Vandalism, deterioration
____ Public works project
____ Mining
__X__ Other (specify)

Comments: The Department of State Lands plans to backfill and contour adit entrances; dismantle and remove tipple remains; and eliminate dumps by contouring and revegetating.

CULTURAL RESOURCE FORM NO. 6

Site Name Centerville Complex Mine

1. Photos:

Accession	Description	Direction
1. Proof #3 - photos 4-35		
2.		
3.		
4.		

2. National Register Statement:

Little remains of the original mine structures except for debris and the ruins of a tipple. The site lack integrity and therefore does not meet the criteria for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

3. Recommendations:

The Department of State Lands plans to backfill and contour the adit entrances and the tipple remains will be dismantled and removed. The dumps will be eliminated and the site will be contoured and revegetated. The site has been recorded, mapped and photographed and further work on the site would not reveal additional information. No further field work is recommended.

Site Name: Centerville Complex

HOMESTEAD/RANCH/FARM GENERAL FORM No.

1. General Description: (no. of buildings, general use, etc.)

- the ruins of a tipple
- five closed and five open adit entrances
- a stone foundation of a small structure which may have been a powder magazine

Key to site sketch map and individual feature/building forms.

2. Historic Ownership:
(1)
(2)
(3)

3. Date of construction:

4. Use (present, original):

Names Associated with Title:

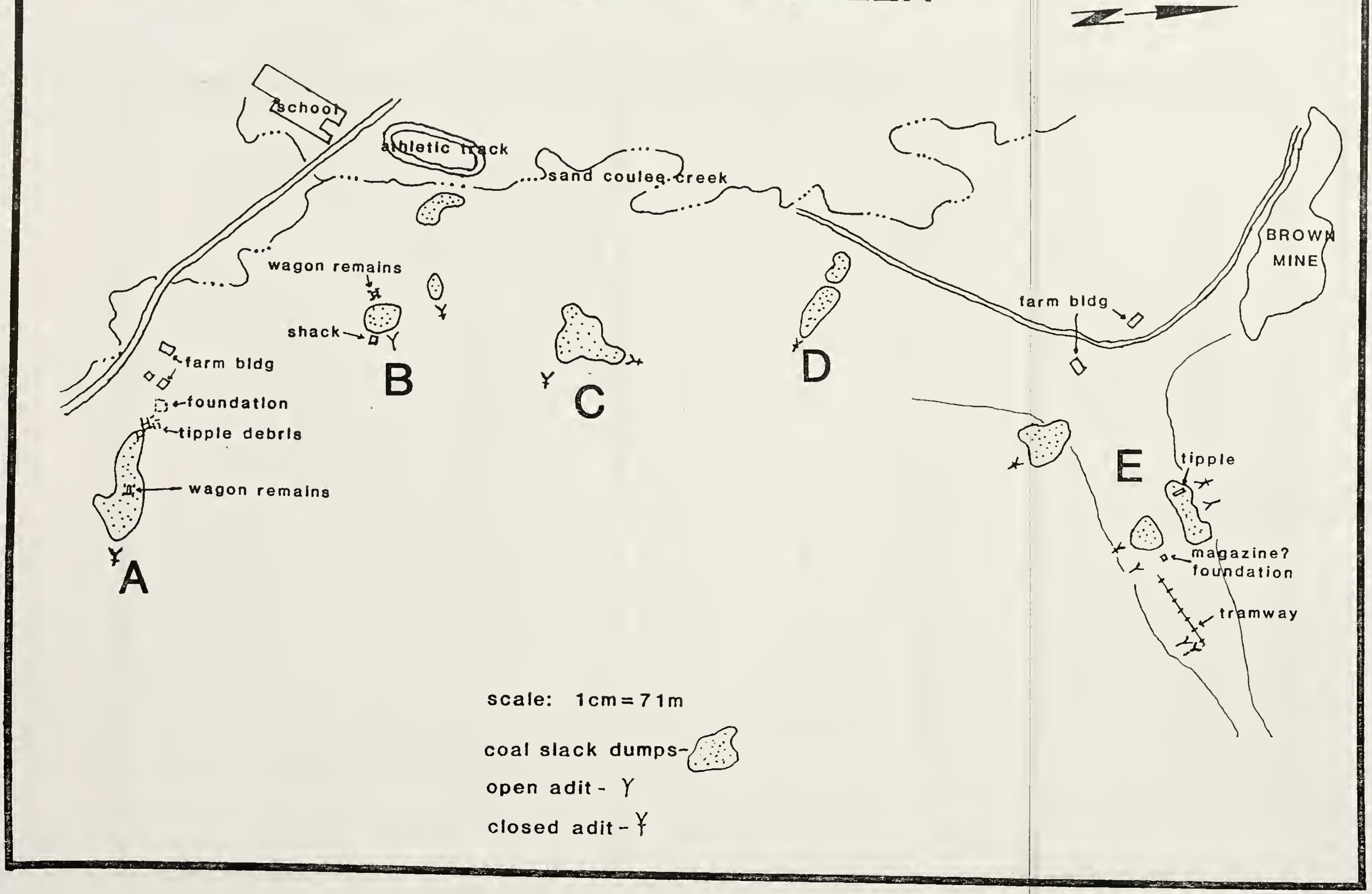
Name (last name first) Date(s) Deed Book Ref.

9. Tract Book Reference:

Name	Type of Entry HE, CE, DLE, other	Serial No.	Patent No.	Representation on GLO Plat
Baque, Ariste	HE (Great Falls L.O.)		#638451 - 6/27/1918	
Ladd, Alfred G.	HE (Helena L.O.)		#1990 - 1/5/1892	
Anthony, James G.,	HE (Great Falls L.O.)		#232 - 8/3/1904	
Brown, Walter	HE (Helena L.O.)		#6275 - 11/28/1900	

10. Noted events associated with property or with persons associated with property:

CENTERVILLE COMPLEX



CENTERVILLE E
TIPPLE